

# Cumberland Valley Caver

*published by*

## Franklin County Grotto



September 2013

# CUMBERLAND VALLEY CAVER

Published by

## FRANKLIN COUNTY GROTTO

An Internal Organization of the National Speleological Society

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Franklin County Grotto meetings are held the 3rd Monday of the month. The location is at the Franklin Fire Dept at 158 W. King Street, Chambersburg, PA 17201. The meeting starts at 7:30 PM. Both grotto caving trips and smaller individual trips are planned at these meetings. All members are invited depending on their ability to safely participate. You must attend at least one vertical training session in order to participate in vertical trips. Visitors are welcome. Contact any of the above individuals for more information or email [fcg@karst.org](mailto:fcg@karst.org).

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Cover: Going caving in Shippensburg, PA., home of 2013 NSS Convention

Photo by Gordy Ley

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See the entire newsletter in **COLOR** on the website  
[http://www.karst.org/fcg/fcg\\_newsletters.htm](http://www.karst.org/fcg/fcg_newsletters.htm)

## ***From the editor:***

This issue turned out to be mostly about the convention. Several members invested a lot of time supporting the convention. Howard and Diane each put in 10 days before, during and after. Gordy Ley spent months training trip leaders, coordinating with land owners and probably drove 500 miles in preparation. I would also like to recognize Professor Tom Feeney for putting together a really great Geology Field Trip. A huge thanks also goes out to Randy VanSyoc, Valley Quarries, for his support in allowing access to the Limestone Quarry and Sand Quarry for the Geology field trip, access to the caves in Williamson and also allowing for the micro-blast demonstration at the quarry. I want to thank all our trip leaders, the cave owners and all the behind the scene support from the FCG member that helped make the 2013 NSS Convention at Shippensburg a success.

I'd like to thank, Gordy, John, Don, Steph, Tom, Ish, Terry, Mike, Drew, Glen, Dick, Pat, Jim and Howard for articles, pictures, quotes, printing, distribution assistance and web support used in getting this issue out to our members and friends.

*Editor*

*Ken Tayman,*

# 70th NSS Convention Baker Caverns tours

*August 8, 2013 by Dick Anderson FCG 30L*



## **Baker Caver Tour**

On Thursday August 8, 2013 myself, Roman Barvinchack and Ken Tayman hosted 3 tours of Baker caverns near Williamson, PA. Permission had been given by owner Lee Meyers to allowing us to share his cave with Convention attendees.

Three tour groups were escorted into the caverns. Each group had time to look at the cave from the tourist trail and wander off trail a bit just to make it feel more like a wild cave trip. One gentleman even used a carbide lamp, this added a nice touch appreciated by us "old timers" who grew up using nothing but carbide.

The participants ranged in age from very young children around age 3 or so use more mature types. The cavers came from Maine, New Hampshire, New York, New Jersey, Connecticut, Maryland, Virginia, West Virginia and of course Pennsylvania. One couple drove up from Virginia after hearing that the cavern would be open for convention. A gentleman from PA originally, was at one time a tour guide at Lincoln Caverns. He toured Baker Caverns and completed the sweep, meaning that with that tour he had toured every show cave, current and former, in the State of Pennsylvania, a feat most of us will never accomplish. Many thanks to Roman and Ken for their assistance and to Lee Meyers for putting up with a bunch of cavers and for sharing the beauty of the cave with those convention goers from our neighboring states. □

# Baker Caverns Convention Photo Trip

*August 7, 2013 by Dick Anderson FCG30L*

On August 7, 2013 during the week of the 70th NSS Convention held at Shippensburg University, myself and Roman Barvinchack hosted an in cave photography workshop session. The Photography Workshop was organized and taught by Peter Jones and John Wood.

The day began with a classroom session which touched on equipment as well as fundamental cave photography and post production techniques. This 3 hour session was well attended including myself and fellow FCG member Don Arrowood.

After lunch, the group traveled to Williamson where we met Roman who had been in contact with Lee Meyers and had gotten the cave unlocked. The participants then entered the cave and divided into 2 groups one led by John Wood and the other led by Peter Jones. Each group focused on different methods of photography, flash and light painting. After an hour or so each group switched.

During the 3 hours or so spent in the cave each group practiced the techniques taught in the morning session. All of the participants enjoyed the sessions, both in the cave and the classroom. Everyone walked away with a much better understanding of cave photography.

Many thanks to Roman, Peter Jones and John Wood. A special thanks to Lee Meyers for allowing access to his cave. □

# P-Caves

*August 6, 2013 by Stephanie Lauren*

I lead a few trips Tuesday during the convention. I am fairly new to the Grotto and this was my first experience guiding others underground.

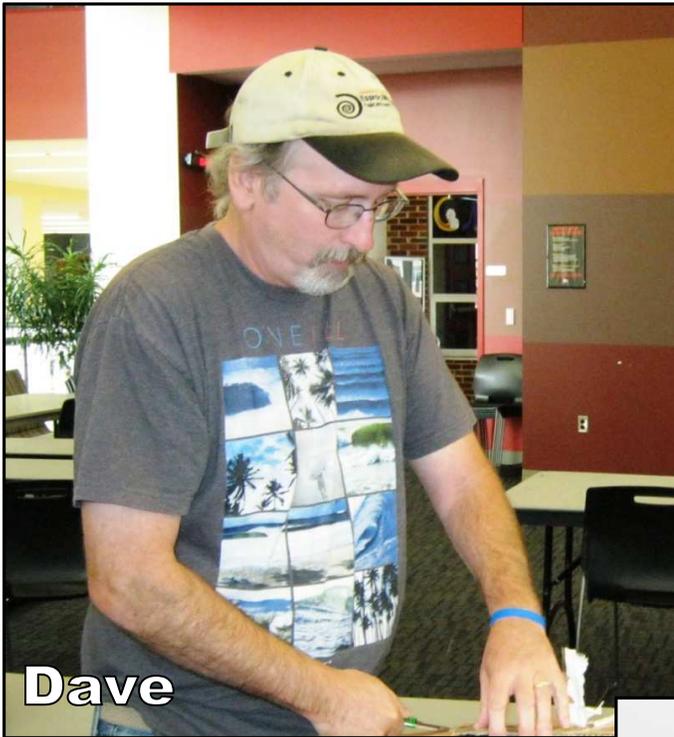
Five people from Philadelphia, PA to Artesia, NM signed up for my P-caves trip in Green Castle. We began our morning entering Woodchuck Pit then Buchanan squeezing ourselves into the smallest spaces our bodies would allow. We spent some time below ground talking of speleothem formations and previous experiences getting to know one another.

One of our members was ready to go home, while the rest of us still have curiosity needing to be spent, so we entered Perseverance. We all had very different levels of experience and abilities but took turns leading each other down winding canyons and crevasses.

It's safe to say this was our most fun and challenging expedition. :)



Stepanie's (r) group she led to P-Caves in Williamson, PA



**Dave**



**Diane working registration**



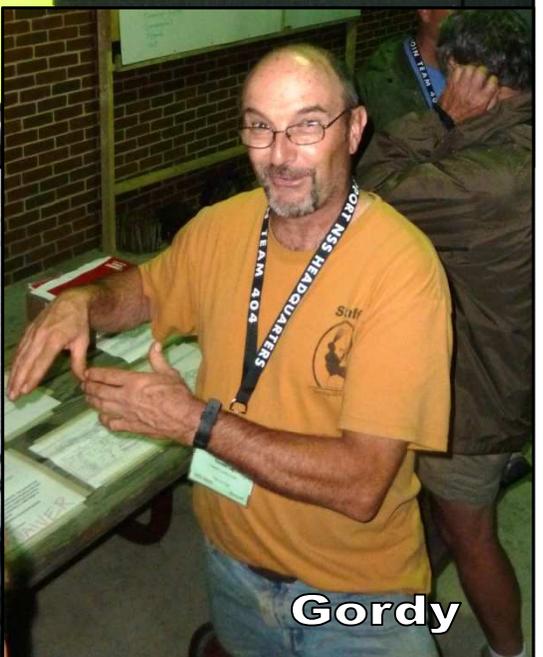
**Steph (r) & trip member**



**Dick & Roman**

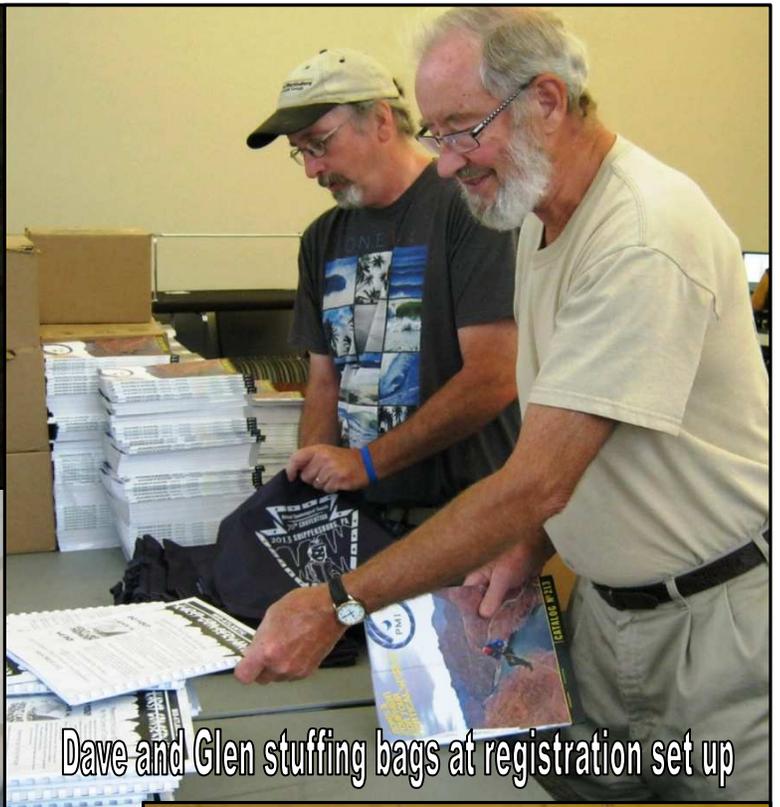
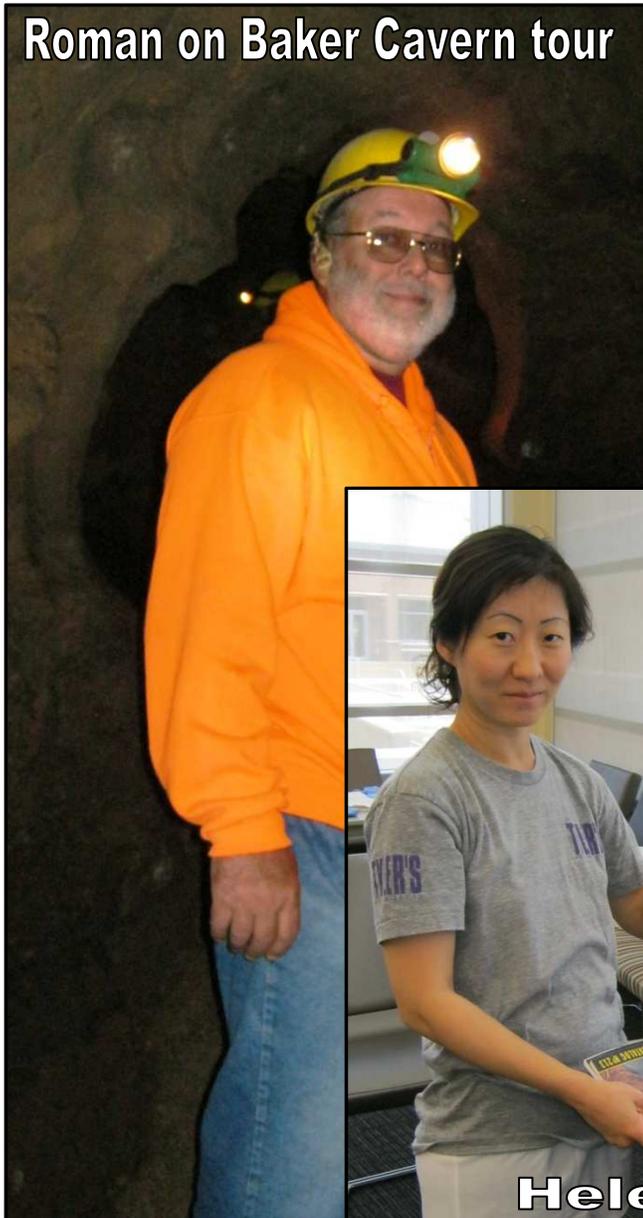


**Howard & Helen in Howard's golf cart**



**Gordy**

Roman on Baker Cavern tour



Dave and Glen stuffing bags at registration set up



Helen



Mike



Shippensburg State College Grotto Club members from the 1950s to 1970s.

## Convention 2013 Caving Trips

*by Gordy Ley (Co-Coordinator for trips)*

During Convention, FCG personnel led quite a few trips. All my mini-marathons finally produced a corps of people willing to lead some trips!

A trip to Fleming's the weekend before convention really energized Ish! I believe he led four trips to Fleming's Trough, including both of the landowner's sons on the trips! I also provided a number of wetsuits for these trips.

Todd Feasley and Drew Welicka led trips to Frustration Pit. Drew accompanied a caver to do some digging at the P-Caves another day. Kevin Rice took a group to Frustration as well. Stephanie Kiefer led a trip to Buchanan, Woodchuck, and Perseverance. Early in the week, I took a group to Walnut Ridge, and placed some rigging for the week.

I led two groups to Cleversburg Sink and the Den Caves on Wednesday. On Thursday, I took a big group to Nelson's Pit and Tytoona Cave, followed, of course, by a good helping of fries at the Spruce Creek Tavern!

All week long, I spent a lot of time giving directions and describing the caves to folks. I think that the convention-goers were well-satisfied with what we had to offer in the way of caving! □

## Corker Hill & Frustration Pit.

*by Drew Welicka*

I took a trip of seven to Frustration Pit and Corker Hill on August 5th around 10:30am. Two women and five men came out for the expedition, with people coming from as far as Montreal and Tennessee to check it out. We went into Corker Hill first and I let the groups split in half to explore the two major sections separately. I'm not sure what they were expecting, but the whole group seemed to think that Corker was nicely decorated.

Needless to say, they were quite happy when we jumped into the main entrance of Frustration. We hit every bit of Frustration including the cellar, and ended up coming out the backdoor under the tree (the most recently opened entrance.) Total time spent underground was about two hours, and all participants were happy with the quick morning jaunt. □

## Geology Field Trip

*Led by Professor Tom Feeney*



Professor Feeney explaining the geology of Shippensburg area

Professor Tom Feeney, Geography and Earth Science, Shippensburg University, PA, led the geology field trip for 90 attendees. It included a visit into Valley Quarries limestone quarry in Shippensburg. The LARGE mining equipment was impressive. Next was a visit to the Sand Quarry. Here the collection of Antietam Quartzite washed down from South Mountain is the source of the sand. Finally, stops at Cleversburg Sink, Dykeman & Big Springs wrapped up the tour. All feedback was this was a GREAT Geology Field trip. Really fantastic job Tom!!





## Caving in Flemings' Caves during 2013 NSS Convention

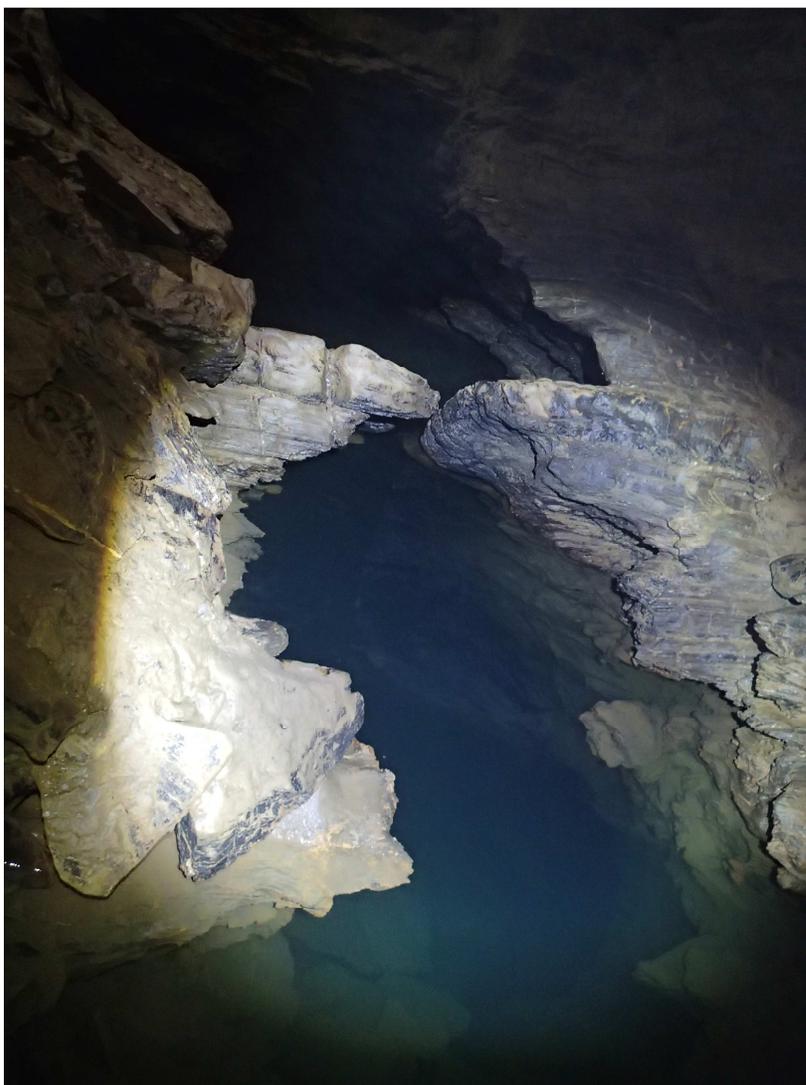
István A. Urcuyo

During the 2013 NSS convention in Shippensburg, PA, I volunteered to guide a number of trips for those attendees wanting to visit some of our local “wet” caves. When all was said and done, I ended up taking three different groups into the Flemings Caves (Flemings Cave and Flemings Trough Spring Cave, Huntingdon County) on three different days. Each group ranged in size from 4 to 8 and based in my experience a group of 8 is about as big as you want to take into either one of those caves.

For each trip we first visited the smaller cave (Flemings Cave) at the bottom of the sinkhole for a quick “wet-up” in preparation for the relatively bigger, and much wetter, trip into the Trough Spring Cave. The trip into the smaller Flemings cave is a fast one (less than 20 minutes) with the highlights being the old “dive-line” which still leads into the depths of the deep pool and then the low stream crawl into the sump pool at the northwest end of the cave. The pools were always very inviting to trip members since their waters were so clear (at least at the beginning).

After that short visit, we walked over the sinkhole edge to the other side to visit our next cave (~200 feet distance). We would then enter the spring trough entrance in a single-file line and do the required “duck-under” at the “sump” (although in all of our trips we had at least 4 inches of airspace). Once in the dry sand room we would take some

pictures, make acquaintance with a surprising number of long-tailed salamanders (*Eurycea longicauda*) and then walk towards the back of the cave to offer the opportunity to do the “water connection” wet squeeze to those in the groups who felt like getting sandy and muddy water into their ears, mouth and other body crevices. Believe it or not, there were always a few willing takers; it just goes to show that cavers are indeed a special breed.



Deep water pool in Fleming Trough Spring Cave, near the sand room



**Line of cavers exiting the Fleming Trough Spring cave.**

We then followed the southwest trending passage to visit “Daniel’s Lake” (or hidden lake) where many cave visitors would take the plunge and then enjoy the fun of climbing up back to the passage ledge with muddy/wet gear. This task is made easier if you have some flexibility, good balance and sense of humor. On the way back we would make a quick “rest” stop in the toadstool room where the lights would be extinguished and some very interesting conversations were overheard. It is amazing what darkness will do to quickly bond a group together. On our way back we would take the route which brought us into the deep pool for a short dip into its indeed deep waters and also help us to bypass the double-back into the dry sand room. Of course, we still have to exit through the same duck-under as we first came in, but the second time around always seemed a lot shorter.

For any visitors to this cave I would definitely recommend wearing a full wetsuit (or at the very least a neoprene “shorty”). It is also worth noting that during these trips we were happy to be able to bring along the adult sons of the property owners. Neither one of them had previously the chance to visit the Flemings Trough Spring Cave past the initial duck-under. They were very excited at the opportunity, had a great time caving with us and were amazed with what this cave holds inside. This is a good thing for the long-term positive relationship between the FCG and the landowners. □

# Fleming Trough Spring Cave



Scott



Stitch & Scott



Istvan

# Caving During OTR

*September, 2013 by Terry McClanathan*

It's been many a year since I've actually attended OTR, the event. However, I'm always out that weekend, usually taking folks to some of my favorite pits in Greenbrier and Pocahontas counties. Anyone who is vertically competent is welcome to come. The main caving day is generally **Saturday**, but sometimes we cave into **Sunday** as well. The agenda for this past OTR went as follows...

Participants: Bob Alderson, Corey Hackley, Adam Lake, Keely Owen, Gerry Adams, and myself

On **Saturday** we first visited Briar Pit. This is located near Alta ten miles west of Lewisburg on the Robert Tuckweller Farm. Robert is very friendly and likes a brief chat with cavers who drop by. The pit is only a couple of miles north of Piercys and Piercys Mill caves. Without a guide it would be very difficult to find as it is a small hole with no sink near the top of a substantial hill. Hike is about half a mile. The entrance is snug with a sloping dogleg a body length down. After that it is a freefall drop in a shaft approximately twenty feet in diameter, Depth is 121 feet. All six of us bounced it and I yo-yoed it a couple of times.

Next stop for the six of us was Cable Pit. A heavy downpour preceded us and everything was sopping wet when we arrived. The landowner, Sam Warren, informed me that nearly an inch of rain had just fallen in about twenty minutes time. Sam prefers to keep visitations to a minimum and requires a waiver, but otherwise has always been cordial to me. There are actually two pits on Sam's farm so we took two ropes with us. Sam allows cavers to drive back a lane to a large machine shed in the middle of the farm. From here it is a short hike through some fields onto a wooded hillside to the main pit entrance in a sizable sink

Cable #1 is a very nice fluted well. In my opinion it is the prettiest open air dome pit in the state. Three separate mapping teams on three separate trips spaced years apart all arrived at 107' for the depth of the drop (how bizarre is that?). The walls are perfectly smooth and the pit is elongated with a steep debris slope at the bottom. This slope makes the total depth about 140 feet. A high alcove looks appealing and has been checked, but dead ends just around the corner. At the other end of the dome a crawl leads to a fifteen foot high dome. Corey said he climbed this and reported another small dome above it.

I split our group and took Gerry and Keely across a gully to Cable #2 Pit a short distance away. This is also a very nice pit but is only 51 feet deep. We kind of ferried each other back and forth between the two pits until everybody had bounced each. I yo-yoed Cable (107) several times. After bouncing the pits Corey and Adam checked some sinks in the pasture for leads. Afterwards we headed back to Lewisburg for dinner and Keely and Gerry headed home while Adam went off to join some other cavers. Bob, Corey, and I spent the night at the WVACS field house. A dense fog had set in following a line of storms and it was a harrowing drive up there.

**Sunday** morning it was still very foggy. Our plan was for an early pre-breakfast assault on Curry pit, then home for Corey, and Bob and I would go down to Grapevine after a bite. Though I'd been to Curry Pit three times back in the early nineties, I'd recently "lost" the location. A couple of years before when I tried to take some of my GVKs caving friends to it in summer, I couldn't find it. I recalled that the entrance was in a small sink, but very overgrown with briars and multiflora rose. On this summer day I knew could easily have walked within ten feet of it and still missed it. I resolved to come back in winter thinking a steam plume might help. This past

Christmas, after nearly an hour of playing phone tag at a friendly neighbors house with the landowners whose property we'd have to cross, I, along with some TAG friends who own a cabin nearby, successfully "found" the entrance.

On this(OTR) foggy morning with limited visibility I turned off the pasture lane too soon and at the wrong turn and nearly missed it again. After some flailing around through tall grasses that were dripping from the fog(we were soaked up to our waists) I managed to get us back onto the lane and found the proper turn-off. In the thick fog and not knowing where they were, following an old buffoon who seemed to be going in circles, I can only imagine the thoughts that must have been going through Corey and Bob's respective heads. I did eventually locate a trail I'd flagged to the entrance back at Christmas and we finally reached our destination. The walk is a good mile without any detours gaining about 600 feet in elevation, but today we probably doubled that.

Curry is a seldom visited hard to find cave featuring a nice 105 foot entrance drop followed by a long slope to a second pit of 48'. If rigged with one line the entire affair will consume a 250 foot rope. We used two ropes. The entrance pit was much nicer than I remembered, smooth walled, roomy, and leading off about halfway down into a spacious flowstone lined canyon. Decades earlier I'd set a rebelay bolt at the top of the second pit to facilitate rigging. We used this and tied our second rope into the main line as a backup. Next time I come here I'll put in another bolt so this drop can be rigged independently with a Y-hang.

The second drop is very pretty and would sport a waterfall in wetter conditions. Today it was just a nice steady fast dripping. Dimensions are about fifteen by forty feet. The water filtered into a small jagged hole which Corey examined, finding air and hearing falling water somewhere ahead. He thinks it's a good lead worth some effort to push. Curry is high up and Bone Norman is just a few miles to the south. Above the 48 foot pit a high canyon extends up into

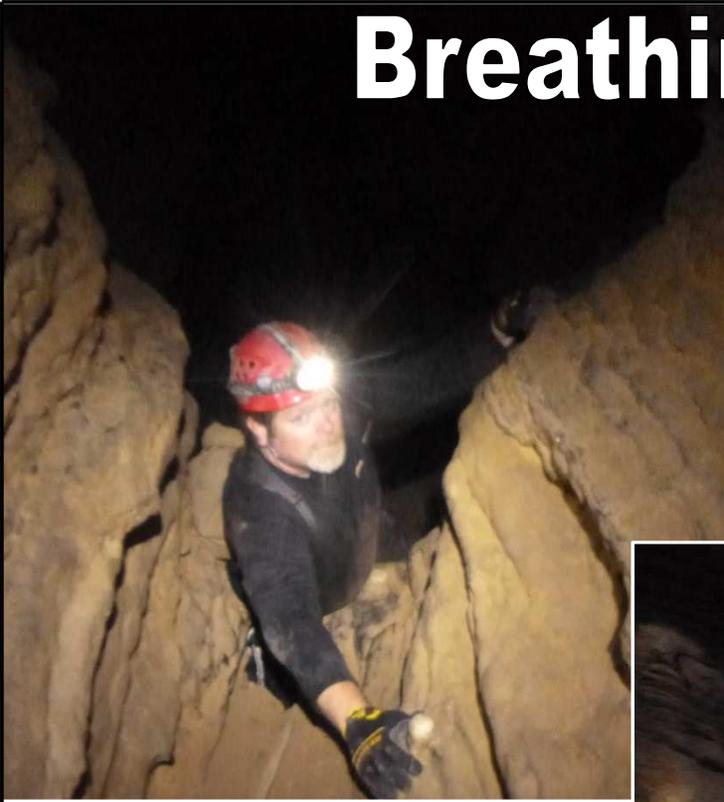
blackness. On my way back up the entrance pit I pendulumed part way across the flowstone canyon mentioned earlier to where I could grab hold of a crack in the wall. From this vantage point I could peer around a corner in the flowstone canyon and see what appeared to be a drop off. I thought this might access the high dome above the 48 foot pit but the distance was too far to pendulum any further than the crack I was clinging to. On his way out Corey checked a small in-feeder, which seemed to be the source of the water dripping into the second pit. He reported that it ended just around the corner. It would appear that Curry Pit may be worth some further investigation in the future.

After our early morning adventures at, and on the way to Curry Pit, Corey headed home and Bob and I went down to Grapevine(Lost World). If I'm in the area and time allows I like to stop by(pre-arranged by phone the week prior), chat with the two Steves, and yo-yo the very fine 118' historical entrance pit. On this Labor Day Sunday there were lots of tourists in the cave and they seemed to enjoy watching Bob and I drop into the cave the old fashioned way. For my part it's a real treat popping into the massive formation filled room when everything is lit up and people are walking around on the various trails. I yo-yoed the pit and then we secured the gate at the top. Bob had not been through the "wild" part of the cave, so before we said goodbye the two of us took a quick tour to the back formation rooms.

And so ended another fun Labor Day weekend of pitting in W. Va. Always fun, and I never get tired of returning to these fine caves and pits. As I said earlier, anyone with vertical experience is welcome. Just drop me a line, and it really doesn't have to be OTR weekend for those of you with a passion for the Doo-Dah parade or who just like to party too much to make the drive down to Greenbrier County.□



# Breathing Cave



# Breathing Cave

July 5-7, 2013 by John Boswell

The idea to visit Breathing Cave in Virginia had been floated at several meetings, so Gordy did all the legwork to put a trip together for the weekend of July 5<sup>th</sup>. Gordy, Dane, me, Jake Troup and Jake's friend Josh met up at the Greencastle McDonald's and caravanned down to Cave Country Campground near Franklin, WV. We set up camp along the bank of the babbling South Branch of the Potomac and spent Friday evening eating, drinking, relaxing, and listening to the bat detector as it alerted us to the presence of many bats as they chased bugs above the campground.

Saturday morning we got a pretty early start (for a FCG trip!) and made our way over the border to Bath County, VA to the new parking area for the cave. We signed the waivers and, after a few false starts, began the 40 minute leisurely hike to the cave entrance, which is in a large sinkhole at the base of a nice limestone escarpment. We geared up and entered the welcome coolness of the cave.

Dane has been in Breathing Cave many times, so he led the way. The passage to the historic saltpeter section of the cave is almost immediately on the left after entering the cave. We decided to save that for another trip and headed past it to the main section of the cave. Breathing has a very evenly-distributed variety of walking, crawling, and climbing up and down. We made our way through the camp room, up the



**Jake at climb-down before the Nutcracker Canyon**

ladder and down through Sand Alley, where Dane said he and his friends used to camp on extended trips due to the soft, sandy floor. Past this, we came to a tricky climbdown called Lover's Leap. Gordy rigged a webbing hand line to give us some assistance and peace of mind since the drop is a little bit undercut. I admired the huge flowstone mound that cascaded

down next to the drop while I waited my turn.

We continued through the cave, steadily descending and admiring many beautifully decorated areas including columns, broomsticks, splattermites, and white flowstone cascades. We decided to bypass the Nutcracker, a fairly tight squeeze

followed immediately by a significant drop. The bypass was an up-and-over hole in some beautiful flowstone that dropped down into a horizontal tube with some water that led us around to a fairly exposed climbdown into the junction room. Many passages radiate out from the junction room, so we were happy to have Dane along to tell us where to go since the map is not very helpful or detailed.

Beyond the junction room the character of the cave began to change from muddy breakdown to more and more clean stream-polished limestone canyons. At places, these canyons soar to amazing heights probably nearing 100 feet and only about 10 feet wide at the bottom. It was beautiful. At several points we encountered huge mud slopes with footsteps cut into them that led to upper levels. Dane told us that these upper levels are very exposed and require straddling 75 foot high canyons at points. None of us felt like we needed to see them that day. Eventually we reached the Serpentine Way, which is a very narrow, meandering canyon with shelves protruding at various levels. It was fun turning this way and that as we twisted our way through. A small stream follows along at the bottom of the Serpentine Way, and we popped out by a waterfall that cascaded smoothly over a rounded slope for about 15 feet or so. We decided that this was a good stopping point as we didn't have equipment to descend the falls and climb back out. Dane said the passage peters out fairly quickly past the waterfall. We rested at the top of the waterfall and enjoyed listening to the soothing sounds of the water

while we gathered our energy for the long trip out. We retraced our route back up and out, exiting the cave after about a 5 hour trip and a good full-body workout.

We decided that since Jake and Josh were new to this area of Virginia and that since we were so close to Lockridge Aqua Cave, we should at least drive them over to the parking area and show them the entrance so they could mark it on their GPS

for a return trip. We hiked the path to the entrance, and they were amazed by the beauty of the clear water issuing forth and by the strong cool wind that was blowing ripples across the surface of the water. Gordy ducked into the entrance without making too much fuss about the cold water. Jake, Josh and me stripped down to our skivvies and Jake stood in the water at the entrance. The coldness of the water took him a bit by surprise and he stepped back out saying



**Gordy among the Pretties near the Sand Room. Photo by John Boswell**

he might need to rethink things. I popped into the water and quickly ducked through the entrance sucking in my breath and stifling my shivers as best I could, putting some peer pressure on the two newbies. Jake came through next, followed by Josh. They hooted and howled at the cold water, but recovered quickly once we were all on the beach. We walked around the entrance room and down some of the passage to near where you would climb up to enter the upper levels of Aqua. The size of the cave and the unusual black limestone walls, as well as the clear water flowing through the passage all combined to lend a sense of awe to the cave. It really felt "adventury". We took some photos and then scampered back through the water and out the entrance.

Back at camp we gathered some wood to have a fire, ate a dinner of burgers and brats, and plopped our exhausted bodies into our chairs to enjoy the evening. I can't report much on what went on beyond that because I was in my sleeping bag and out cold by 9:15.

Sunday we took our time breaking camp and enjoyed watching the puffy white clouds drift over the mountain. We eventually headed out and made a stop at the John Guilday Preserve to look at the kiosk and entrances for Trout and New Trout Caves. Hamilton Cave is also there, but we didn't walk up to that entrance. The rest of the drive home was uneventful and we arrived back at Greencastle around 4:00 pm ☐



Josh at step across in Canyon back to "waterfall"

## "Quotes" of the Quarter

"Ugh! Almost made me puke!"

*JB to KT re flatulence in camper*

"Follow the air..."

*TH to KT & JB re successful dig technique*

# FCG Picnic 2013



**Kenneth Tayman, Editor  
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## **FRANKLIN COUNTY GROTTO**



**Hector Mejia Picaseno from Mexico City, came up just to attend Convention**